

Canadian  
Pamphlets  
04294

Smith, Goldwin, 1823-1910

On some supposed consequences of  
the doctrine of historical progress.  
Oxford, 1861.



ON  
SOME SUPPOSED CONSEQUENCES OF THE  
DOCTRINE OF HISTORICAL PROGRESS.

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A Lecture

DELIVERED BY

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APRIL, MDCCC LXI.

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~~CANCELLED~~

Oxford & London:  
J. H. AND JAS. PARKER.  
1861.

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22.3.56

## A LECTURE, &c.

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IN previous lectures on the "Study of History" I fully accepted the doctrine of Historical Progress. It is obvious that the knowledge and wealth of our race increase and accumulate from age to age, and that their increase and accumulation re-act powerfully on the moral state of man. It is less obvious, but it seems not less certain, that our views of morality itself expand, and that our moral code is improved, as, by the extension of human intercourse, our moral relations are multiplied, and as, by the advancement of science and jurisprudence, they become better understood. Nor can it easily be denied that this progress extends even to religion. In learning more of man we learn more of Him in whose image man was made; in learning more of the creation we learn more of the Creator; and everything which in the course of civilization tends to elevate, deepen, and refine the character generally, tends to elevate, deepen, and refine it in its religious aspect.

But then it is alleged, and even triumphantly proclaimed, that tremendous consequences follow from this doctrine. If we accept historical progress, it is said, we must give up Christianity. Christianity, we are told, like other phases of the great onward movement of humanity, has had its place, and that a great place, in history. In its allotted epoch it was

progressive in the highest degree, and immense veneration and gratitude are due to it on that account: but, like other phases of the same movement, it had its appointed term. That term it has already exceeded. It has already become stationary, and even retrograde; it has begun, instead of being the beneficent instrument, to be the arch-enemy of human progress. It cumberes the earth; and the object of all honest, scientific, free-thinking men, who are lovers of their kind, should be to quicken the death-pangs into which it has manifestly fallen, and remove once for all this obstruction to the onward movement of the race. Confusion and distress will probably attend the final abandonment of "the popular religion;" but it is better at once to encounter them, than to keep up any longer an imposture which is disorganizing and demoralizing to society, as well as degrading to the mind of man. 'Let us at once, by a courageous effort, say farewell to our old faith, and, by a still more courageous effort, find ourselves a new one!' A gallant resolution, and one which proves those who have taken it to be practical believers in free-will, and redeems them from the reproach of admitting the logical consequences of their own doctrines touching the necessary progress of humanity by way of development and under the influence of invariable laws. If history grows like a vegetable, or like the body of an animal, no effort of courage can be needed, or avail, to direct its growth. We have only to let well, or ill, alone.

The notion that Christianity is at this moment manifestly in an expiring state, or, to use the favourite language of the sect, that "the popular religion has entered on its last phase," is perhaps partly produced by the reform, or attempted reform, of Christian doc-



trine which is at present going on. This movement is supposed to be an exact parallel to the attempt made by the later Platonists to rationalize the popular mythology of Greece, and equally ominous of approaching dissolution to the superstition with which its more philosophic adherents found it necessary thus desperately to deal. The analogy would be more just if the later Platonists, instead of endeavouring to bring a sensual superstition to the level of the age by violently importing into it a spiritual philosophy, had endeavoured to restore it to its primitive and most sensual simplicity. Though even in that case it would not be certain, without further proof, that because the attempt to reform Polytheism had failed, Christianity must be incapable of reform. Historical analogy, as an interpreter of present events, has its uses, and it has also its limits. Christianity supposes that with its Founder something new came into the world. The King of Siam may, after all, be about, in contradiction to the whole of his experience, to see the water freeze.

If, however, they to whom I allude have rightly read the present by the light of the past; if, as they say, a sound and free philosophy of history distinctly points to the approaching departure of Christianity from the world, a terrible crisis has indeed arrived, and one which might well be expected to strike their rhetorical exultation dumb. They admit, I believe, that religion, or whatever stands in the place of it, is the very core, centre, and vital support of our social and political organization; so that without a religion the civil tie would be loosened, personal would completely prevail over public motives, selfish ambition and cupidity would break loose in all directions, and society and the body politic would be in danger of dis-

solution. They cry aloud, as I have said, that Christianity being exploded, a new religion must be produced in order to save humanity from ruin and despair. Now to produce a new religion off-hand, and that at a moment of the most appalling peril, and consequently of the greatest mental agony and distraction, is an achievement which even the most extreme believers in free-will and self-exertion would scarcely think possible to man. I am not aware that so much as the rudiment of a new religion has yet been actually produced, unless it be the Humanitarian religion of M. Comte, which is merely a mad travestie of the Roman Catholic Church, and from which even the disciples of the Comtist philosophy, if they have any sense of the grotesque remaining, turn away in despair. Thus the law of human development, instead of being, like the laws discovered by science, regular and beneficent, the just object of our confidence as well as of our admiration, has failed abruptly, and brought humanity to the brink of an abyss.

It is my strong conviction that history has arrived at no such crisis; that the indications of historical philosophy have been misunderstood, and that they do not point to the impending fall, but rather to the approaching regeneration of Christendom. I do not think that we should refuse to consider, in this lecture-room, a question which lies at the very root of the philosophy of history, merely because it happens also to be of the highest practical importance. I propose, therefore, to add a few remarks on this point, by way of supplement to the two general lectures on the "Study of History," in which the Doctrine of Historical Progress has been maintained.

In the first place, we are struck by the fact that



sustained historical progress has not been universal, as those against whom I am arguing always assume, but has been confined to Christian nations. For a short time the Mahomedan nations seemed to advance, not merely in conquering energy, but in civilization. They have even been set up as the moral rivals of Christendom by those who are anxious that Christendom should not appear to be without a rival. But their progress was greatest where they were most immediately in contact with Christianity, and it has long since ended in utter corruption and irrevocable decay. Where is the brilliant monarchy of Haroun Alraschid? How ephemeral was it compared even with that old Byzantine Empire into whose frame Christianity had infused a new life under the very ribs of death; a life which even the fatal bequest of Roman despotism, extending itself to the Church as well as to the State, could scarcely quench, and which, through ages of Mahomedan oppression, has smouldered on beneath the ashes to burst out again in reviving Greece. Even in the Moorish communities of Spain, the flower as they were of Mahomedan civilization, internal corruption had prepared the way for the conquering arms of Ferdinand and Isabella. Mahomedanism, however, whatever the degree of progressive energy displayed by it may have been, was not a separate and independent religion, but a debased offspring of Judaism and Christianity. From the intercourse of its founder with Jews and Christians it derived the imposing monotheism which has been its strength both as a conquering power and as a system of civilization; while the want of a type of character, such as Christianity possesses, has been in every sense its fatal weakness. Turning to the remoter East, we find that its history has not been

a history of progress, but of the successive descents of conquering races from the more bracing climate of the North, subjugating the languid inhabitants of the plains, and founding a succession of empires, sometimes mighty and gorgeous, but always barren of nobler fruits, which, when the physical energy of the conquering race was spent in its turn, at once fell into decay. The semblance of progress, in short, has been but a semblance, due merely to fresh infusions of animal vigour, not to any sustaining principle of moral life. China advanced at an early period to a certain point of material civilization; but having reached that point she became a byword of immobility, as Egypt, the ancient China, was in a former day. This immemorial stagnation seems now about to end in total dissolution, unless Christian nations should infuse a regenerating influence from without. The civilization of Mexico is deplored by certain philosophers, who seem to think that had its career not been cut short by Spanish conquest, it might have attained a great height, and confirmed their views of history. But what reason is there to think that Mexico would ever have advanced beyond great buildings erected by slave labour, human sacrifices, and abominable vices? Again, we are told that the Christian view of history must be narrow and false, because it does not include in its theory of human progress the great negro and fetichist populations of Africa. But I would fain be informed what part the negro and fetichist populations of Africa have really played in the progress of humanity; or how the invariable law of spontaneous development through a certain series of intellectual and social conditions which we are told governs the history of all nations, has been verified in their case.

The progress of ancient Greece and Rome was real and high while it lasted, and Christianity has received its fruits into herself. Its moral sources deserve to be more accurately explored than they have yet been; but in both cases it came to an end at the moment of its apparent culmination, from internal causes and without hope of renewal. In both cases it sank under an empire, the Macedonian in one case, that of the Cæsars in the other, which, whatever it may have been in its effects on humanity at large, was certainly the grave of republican virtue.

It is confidently said that the historical progress of the most advanced nations of Europe during recent times has been beyond the pale of Christendom, and that it forms a conclusive proof of the exhaustion and decline of Christianity. The intellect of Protestant Germany, which has played so momentous a part in the historical progress of the last century, is triumphantly cited as a palpable instance of this fact. There is much which to the eye of the theologian, looking to religious professions, is without the pale of Christendom; but which to the historical eye, looking to moral connexions, is still within it. That increase of infidelity, which is spoken of with so much alarm on one side, and so much exultation on the other, theologically viewed, is no doubt great, especially if we look not to mere numbers, but to intellectual cultivation and influence; but, viewed morally, it is, considering the distractions of Christendom, surprisingly small. Great masses of intelligence and eminent leaders of thought in all departments have been nominally and outwardly estranged from Christendom by the divisions of the Churches; by the rending of the truth and of the means of religious influence

between them ; by the barren and impotent dogmatism into which, through their rivalries and controversies, they are perpetually driving each other ; by the sinister alliances of some of them with political obstructiveness and injustice ; by the apparent conflict which their pretensions create between the claims of reason and those of religious faith ; by the false ground which some of them have taken in regard to the discoveries of science and historical philosophy ; and most of all, perhaps, by the contradiction which their mutual denunciations produce between the palpable facts of our common morality and the supposed judgments of religion. But it will be found, on closer inspection, that these apparent seceders from Christendom remain Christians in their whole view of the world, of God, of the human character and destinies ; speak a language and appeal to principles and sympathies essentially Christian ; draw their moral life from the Christendom which surrounds them ; receive their wives at Christian altars, and bring up their children in the Christian faith. Many a great writer who is brought forward as a proof that the intellect of the age is Christian no longer, will be found, on examination, to have nothing in his writings which is not derived from a Christian source. Schleiermacher appears to be hailed as one of those who, by their criticisms, have pronounced the doom of the “ popular religion.” Schleiermacher received the Eucharist on his death-bed, and died declaring that he had adhered to the living spirit of Christianity rather than to the dead letter. He may have been illogical ; but he cannot be said, historically, not to have been a Christian.

In France perhaps, alone, owing to peculiar disasters, not the least of which was the hypocritical re-



establishment of Roman Catholicism by the statecraft of Napoleon, a really great estrangement of the people from Christianity has taken place. And what are the consequences of the estrangement to the progress of this great nation, which not a century ago was intellectually at the head of Europe, which seemed by her efforts to have opened a new era of social justice for mankind, and which the atheistical school desire now, in virtue of her partial atheism, to erect into the president and arbitress of the civilized world? The consequences are a form of government, not created by a supreme effort of modern intellect, but borrowed from that of declining Rome, which, bereft of Christian hope, immolates the future to the present; a despairing abandonment of personal liberty and freedom of opinion; a popular literature of heathen depravity; and a loss of moral objects of interest, while military glory and material aggrandizement are worshipped in their place. If this state of things is progressive, what is retrograde?

There are three great elements of human progress, the moral, the intellectual, and the productive; or, virtue, knowledge, and industry. But these three elements, though distinct, are not separate, but closely connected with each other. There is a moral element in every good work of intellect, and in every good production of industry; while, on the other hand, the works of intellect and the productions of industry exercise a vast influence on our moral condition. It was contended in a former lecture that the moral element of progress was the cardinal element of the three; the direction of the intellect to good objects, which leads to the attainment of useful knowledge, and the self-exertion and self-denial which constitute in-

dustry, being determined by morality, without which the intellectual and productive powers of man would be aimless and wandering forces, working at random good and evil. It was also contended that the formation of good moral character, the only object which comprehends all the rest, and which all human actions, discoveries, and productions promote and subserve, was the final end of all human effort, the ultimate mark and goal of human progress, and the true key to history. If these positions are sound, the main questions, in determining the ultimate relation between Christianity and human progress, will be, whether the Christian morality is sound and universal, and whether the Christian type of character is perfect and final. It is only if the Christian morality is not sound and universal that it can be discarded or transcended by the moral progress of the race. It is only if the type of character consecrated in the Gospels is not perfect and final that its consecration can ever interfere with the aspirations of humanity advancing towards the goal of purity and perfection. These are the main questions; we shall also have to consider whether Christianity conflicts with or discourages any special kind of human progress, intellectual or industrial.

What is the root and essence of moral character? What is it that connects together all those moral habits which we call the virtues, and warrants us in giving them the collective name of virtue? Courage, chastity, and generosity are, at first sight, three different things: in what respect is it that they are one? What is the common element of moral attraction in all that vast variety of character, regular or irregular, severe or tender, to which, in history and life, our hearts are drawn? Some one principle there must



surely be which traverses all this uniform diversity, some one principle which our hearts would recognise, not as a mere intellectual speculation, but as the real spring of moral endeavour in themselves. And if there be such a principle, it will, on our hypothesis, be the key at once to the life of individual man and to the history of the race. It will contain in it not only a true moral philosophy, but a true philosophy of history.

Now, whatever mystery may shroud the ultimate source of our moral being, thus much seems tolerably certain, that the seat of the moral principle in our nature is indicated and covered by the quality to which, according to the intensity of its manifestation, we give various names, ranging from benevolence to self-sacrifice. There is, I apprehend, no special virtue which is not capable of being resolved into this. To take those which appear least obviously identical with benevolence—courage, temperance, and chastity. Courage, when it is a virtue, is the sacrifice of our personal safety to the interests of our kind, which rises to its highest pitch in the case of martyrdom. Temperance fits us, while intemperance unfits us, to perform our duty to society, and spares, while intemperance wastes, the common store. Chastity is, in like manner, a sacrifice of the selfish animal passions to the social principle, since the indulgence of lust both involves the corruption and misery of its victims, and destroys in the man who indulges it the capacity for pure affection. We need not here discuss the question whether there is any virtue which is solely and purely self-regarding. If there is, its good effects must end with the individual life; it cannot be one of the springs of human progress.

Benevolence may of course take as many special forms and produce as great a variety of benevolent characters as there are social and unselfish objects in the world. It may be the advocacy of a particular cause or principle; it may be the pursuit of a particular ideal: both the cause or principle and the ideal being matters of common interest and tending to the common good. It may be the devotion to science or art, as the instruments of human improvement and happiness, which forms the moral side of the intellectual life. It may be extended in its scope to the whole human race, and labour for the universal good of man; or it may be limited to the narrow circle of a nation, a guild, a family, through whom, however, it does indirectly and unconsciously embrace mankind. It is sure to be affected, and almost sure to be somewhat distorted in its special character by the position of each man in life, and to shew itself as a peculiar self-devotion to country in the case of the good soldier, and as a peculiar self-devotion to the interests of justice in the case of the good judge. Hence arise a multiplicity of derivative and secondary virtues, and an infinite variety of characters, of each of which some derivative and secondary virtue is the peculiar stamp. But multiform as these virtues and characters are, it will be found that they are uniform also; that, upon examination, they may all be reduced to benevolence in one or other of its various degrees; and that on this principle the moral philosopher and the educator, if they would attain to real results, must take their stand. In the same manner, I apprehend that the approbation and affection which benevolence obtains for us, these, and not anything more individual or more transcendental, are the real earthly

assurance and support of virtue, the earthly object of virtuous endeavours, the supreme happiness of our earthly life. What these foreshadow, and how they foreshadow it, is not a fit subject of inquiry here; but certainly the Gospel holds out a social, not an individual heaven.

In a former lecture the question was raised whether morality lies in action or in character, and whether our approbation of moral actions is translated from action to character, or from character to action. Some reasons were given for inclining to believe that it is in character rather than in action that morality lies. It is said, on the other hand, that character is only a formed disposition to act in a particular way, and that our approbation attaches to good character only as the source, actual or presumptive, of good action. I reply, that character is not only a disposition to act; it is a disposition to feel and to participate in certain emotions; emotions which are sometimes incapable of being translated into action. You would not say that a man's character was perfect who should be incapable of sympathizing in the emotions produced by the most glorious or the most tender visions of nature; and yet what special action can flow from such sympathies as these? Does the presence of a beloved friend give us pleasure merely as implying a likelihood of his active beneficence? And again, what presumption of active beneficence can there be in the case of the dead, our affection for whose characters often survives the grave? This passive element in character, generally called sensibility, seems to be a main source of poetry and art, which play so important a part in human life and history. Now a character formed on benevolence, as it implies not only action, but affection and the power

of sympathy, does embrace a passive as well as an active element, or rather, it presents a passive as well as an active phase; and in this respect again it seems to be perfect, universal, and final. A character formed on the moral basis propounded by Gibbon, the love of pleasure and the love of action, would fail, among other things, in not having a sympathetic side.

Now Christianity rests on one fundamental moral principle, as the complete basis of a perfect moral character, that principle being The love of our Neighbour, another name for Benevolence. And the Type of Character set forth in the Gospel history is an absolute embodiment of Love both in the way of action and affection, crowned by the highest possible exhibition of it in an act of the most transcendent self-devotion to the interest of the human race. This being the case, it is difficult to see how the Christian morality can ever be brought into antagonism with the moral progress of mankind; or how the Christian type of Character can ever be left behind by the course of human development, lose the allegiance of the moral world, or give place to a newly emerging and higher ideal. This type, it would appear, being perfect, will be final. It will be final, not as precluding future history, but as comprehending it. The moral efforts of all ages, to the consummation of the world, will be efforts to realize this character, and to make it actually, as it is potentially, universal. While these efforts are being carried on under all the various circumstances of life and society, and under all the various moral and intellectual conditions attaching to particular men, an infinite variety of characters, personal and national, will be produced; a variety ranging from the highest human grandeur down to the



very verge of the grotesque. But these characters, with all their variations, will go beyond their source and their ideal only as the rays of light go beyond the sun. Humanity, as it passes through phase after phase of the historical movement, may advance indefinitely in excellence ; but its advance will be an indefinite approximation to the Christian Type. A divergence from that type, to whatever extent it may take place, will not be progress, but debasement and corruption. In a moral point of view, in short, the world may abandon Christianity, but it can never advance beyond it. This is not a matter of authority, or even of Revelation. If it is true, it is a matter of reason as much as anything in the world.

There are many peculiarities arising out of personal and historical circumstances, which are incident to the best human characters, and which would prevent any one of them from being universal or final as a type. But the Type set up in the Gospels as the Christian Type seems to have escaped all these peculiarities, and to stand out in unapproached purity as well as in unapproached perfection of moral excellence.

The good moral characters which we see among men fall, speaking broadly, into two general classes ; those which excite our reverence and those which excite our love. These two classes are essentially identical, since the object of our reverence is that elevation above selfish objects, that dignity, majesty, nobleness, appearance of moral strength which is produced by a disregard of selfish objects in comparison of those which are of a less selfish and therefore of a grander kind. But though essentially identical, they form, as it were, two hemispheres in the actual world of moral excellence ; the noble and the amiable,

or, in the language of moral taste, the grand and the beautiful. Being, however, essentially identical, they constantly tend to fusion in the human characters which are nearest to perfection, though, no human character being perfect, they are never actually fused. Now, if the type proposed in the Gospels for our imitation were characteristically noble or characteristically amiable, characteristically grand or characteristically beautiful, it might have great moral attractions, but it would not be universal or final. It would belong to one peculiar hemisphere of character, and even though man might not yet actually have transcended it, the ideal would lie beyond it ; it would not remain for ever the mark and goal of our moral progress. But the fact is, it is neither characteristically noble and grand, nor characteristically amiable and beautiful ; but both in an equal degree, perfectly and indistinguishably, the fusion of the two classes of qualities being complete, so that the mental eye, though it be strained to aching, cannot discern whether that on which it gazes be more the object of reverence or of love.

There are differences again between the male and female character, under which, nevertheless, we divine that there lies a real identity, and a consequent tendency to fusion in the ultimate ideal. Had the Gospel type of character been stamped with the peculiar marks of either sex, we should have felt that there was an ideal free from those peculiarities beyond it. But this is not the case. It exhibits, indeed, the peculiarly male virtue of courage in the highest degree, and in the form in which it is most clear of mere animal impetuosity and most evidently a virtue ; but this form is the one common to both sexes, as



the annals of martyrdom prove. The Roman Catholics have attempted to consecrate a female type, that of the Virgin, by the side of that which they take to be characteristically male. But the result obviously is a mutilation of the original type, which really contained all that the other is supposed to supply; and the creation of a second type which has nothing distinctive, but is in its attributes, as well as in its history, merely a pale and partial reflection of the first.

There is an equally notable absence of any of the peculiarities which attend particular callings and modes of life, and which, though so inevitable under the circumstances of human society, that we have learnt to think them beauties, would disqualify a Character for being universal and the ideal. The Life depicted in the Gospel is one of pure beneficence, disengaged from all peculiar social circumstances, yet adapted to all. In vain would the Roman Catholic priest point to it as an example of a state like his own; the circumstances of Christ's life and mission repel any inferences of the kind.

The Christian Type of Character, if it was constructed by human intellect, was constructed at the confluence of three races, the Jewish, the Greek, and the Roman, each of which had strong national peculiarities of its own. A single touch, a single taint of any one of those peculiarities, and the character would have been national, not universal; transient, not eternal: it might have been the highest character in history, but it would have been disqualified for being the ideal. Supposing it to have been human, whether it were the effort of a real man to attain moral excellence, or a moral imagination of the writers of the Gospels, the chances, surely, were infinite against its escaping any

tincture of the fanaticism, formalism, and exclusiveness of the Jew, of the political pride of the Roman, of the intellectual pride of the Greek. Yet it has entirely escaped them all.

Historical circumstances affect character sometimes directly, sometimes by way of reaction. The formalism of the Pharisees might have been expected to drive any character with which it was brought into collision into the opposite extreme of laxity; yet no such effect can be discerned. Antinomianism is clearly a deflection from the Christian pattern, and the offspring of a subsequent age.

The political circumstances of Judea, as a country suffering from the oppression of foreign conquerors, were calculated to produce in the oppressed Jews either insurrectionary violence (which was constantly breaking out) or the dull apathy of Oriental submission. But the Life which is the example of Christians escaped both these natural impressions. It was an active and decisive attack on the evils of the age; but the attack was directed not against political tyranny or its agents, but against the moral corruption which was its source.

There are certain qualities which are not virtues in themselves, but are made virtues by time and circumstance, and with their times and circumstances pass away; yet, while they last, are often naturally and almost necessarily esteemed above those virtues which are most real and universal. These factitious virtues are the offspring for the most part of early states of society, and the attendant narrowness of moral vision. Such was headlong valour among the Northmen. Such was, and is, punctilious hospitality among the tribes of the Desert. Such was the fanatical patriot-

ism of the ancients, which remained a virtue, while the nation remained the largest sphere of moral sympathy known to man,—his vision not having yet embraced his kind. The taint of one of these factitious and temporary virtues would, in the eye of historical philosophy, have been as fatal to the perfection and universality of a type of character as the taint of a positive vice. Not only the fellow-countrymen, but the companions and Apostles of Christ were, by the account of the Gospels, imbued with that Jewish patriotism, the fanatical intensity of which disgusted even the ancient world. They desired to convert their Master into a patriot chief and to turn His universal mission into one for the peculiar benefit of His own race. Had they succeeded in doing so, even in the slightest degree,—or to take a different hypothesis, had those who constructed the mythical character of Christ admitted into it the slightest tinge of a quality which they could hardly, without a miracle, distinguish from a real virtue,—the time would have arrived when, the vision of man being enlarged, and his affection for his country becoming subordinate to his affection for his kind, the Christian Type would have grown antiquated, and would have been left behind in the progress of history towards a higher and ampler ideal. But such is not the case. A just affection for country may indeed find its prototype, in Him who wept over the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and who offered the Gospel first to the Jew: but His character stands clear of the narrow partiality which it is the tendency of advancing civilization to discard. From exaggerated patriotism and from exaggerated cosmopolitanism the Christian Example is equally free.

Asceticism, again, if it has never been a virtue, even

under exceptional circumstances, is very easily mistaken for one, and has been almost universally mistaken for one in the East. There are certain states of society,—such, for example, as that which the Western monks were called upon to evangelize and civilize by their exertions,—in which it is difficult to deny the usefulness and merit of an ascetic life. But had the type of character set before us in the Gospel been ascetic, our social experience must have discarded it in the long run ; as our moral experience would have discarded it in the long run had it been connected with those formal observances into the consecration of which asceticism almost inevitably falls. But the type of character set before us in the Gospels is not ascetic, though it is the highest exhibition of self-denial. Nor is it connected with formal observances, though, for reasons which are of universal and permanent validity, it provisionally condescends to the observances established in the Jewish Church. The character of the Essenes, as painted by Josephus, which seems to outvie the Christian character in purity and self-denial, is tainted both with asceticism and formalism, and though a lofty and pure conception, could not have been accepted by man as permanent and universal.

Cast your eyes over the human characters of history, and observe to how great an extent the most soaring and eccentric of them are the creatures of their country and their age. Examine the most poetic of human visions, and mark how closely they are connected, either by way of direct emanation or of reaction, with the political and social circumstances amidst which they were conceived ; how manifestly the Utopia of Plato is an emanation from the Spartan commonwealth, how



manifestly the Utopia of Rousseau is a reaction against the artificial society of Paris. What likelihood, then, was there that the imagination of a peasant of Galilee would spring at a bound beyond place and time, and create a type of character perfectly distinct in its personality, yet entirely free from all that entered into the special personalities of the age; a type which satisfies us as entirely as it satisfied him, and which, as far as we can see or imagine, will satisfy all men to the end of time.

The character of Mahomet, and the character which is represented by the name of Buddha, were no doubt great improvements in their day on anything which had preceded them among the races out of which they arose. But the character of Mahomet was deeply tainted with fierce Arab enterprise, that of Buddha with languid Eastern resignation: and all progress among the nations by which these types were consecrated has long since come to an end.

M. Comte has constructed for his sect a whimsical Calendar of historic characters, in imitation of the Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints. Each month and each day is given to the historic representative of some great achievement of Humanity. Theocracy is there, represented by Moses, ancient poetry by Homer, ancient philosophy by Aristotle, Roman Civilization by Cæsar, Feudal Civilization by Charlemagne, and so forth; the ancient Saints having their modern counterparts, and each having a crowd of minor Saints belonging to the same department of historical progress in his train. Catholicism is there, represented somewhat strangely by St. Paul instead of St. Peter. Christianity is not there: neither is Christ. It cannot be asserted that a person circumstantially mentioned by Tacitus is less

historical than Prometheus, Orpheus, and Numa, who all appear in this Calendar; and the allegation that there is no Christianity but Catholicism, and that St. Paul, not Christ, was its real founder, is too plainly opposed to facts to need discussion. The real reason, I apprehend, is that Christianity and its Author, though unquestionably historical, have no peculiar historical characteristics, and no limited place in history. And are we to believe that men whose culture was so small, and whose range of vision was necessarily so limited as those of the first Christians, produced a character which a French atheist philosopher of the nineteenth century finds himself unable to treat as human, and place, in its historical relations, among the human benefactors of the race? Do you imagine that it is from respect for the feelings of Christian society that M. Comte hesitates to put this name into his Calendar, beside the names of Cæsar and Frederic the Great? The treatise in which the Calendar is given opens with an announcement that M. Comte, by a decisive proclamation, made at what he is pleased to style the memorable conclusion of his course of lectures, has inaugurated the reign of Humanity and put an end to the reign of God.

The essence of man's moral nature, clothed with a personality so vivid and intense as to excite through all ages the most intense affection, yet divested of all those peculiar characteristics, the accidents of place and time, by which human personalities are marked,—what other notion than this can philosophy form of Divinity manifest on earth?

The acute and candid author of "The Soul" and the "Phases of Faith" has felt, though he has not clearly expressed, the critical importance of this ques-



tion. He has felt that a perfect type of character was the essence of a practical religion, and that if the Christian type was perfect it would be hopeless to set up a new religion beside it. Accordingly he tries to point out imperfections in the character of Christ; and the imperfections which he points out are two in number. The first is the exhibition of indignation against the hypocritical and soul-murdering tyranny of the Pharisees. This is surely a strange exception to be taken by one who is himself a generous denouncer of tyranny and oppression. I have little doubt that had no indignation against sanctimonious crime been exhibited, its absence would have been seized upon as a proof of imperfect humanity. The second defect alleged is the absence of mirth, and of laughter as its natural and genial manifestation. This objection, though it grates strangely on our ears, is not unreasonable. Mirth is a real part of our moral nature, significant as well as the rest. The great ministers of pure and genial mirth, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Moliere, have fulfilled a mission of mercy and justice as well as of pleasure to mankind, and have their place of honour in history with the other great benefactors of the race. And, on the other hand, the attempts to expel mirth from human life and character made by certain austere sects, have resulted not only in moroseness but in actual depravity. If this element of good in history is really alien to the Christian type, the Christian type is imperfect; we shall have a moral life beside it and beyond it, and at a certain point we shall become aware of its imperfection, and our absolute allegiance to it will cease. But before determining this question, the objector would have done well to inquire what mirth really was; whether it was a

radically distinct feeling, or only a phase of feeling; and whether laughter was of its essence or only an accident? Mirth, pity and contempt seem to be three emotions which are all excited by human weakness. To weakness add suffering, and mirth is turned to pity; add vice, and mirth is turned to contempt. Mirth itself is excited by weakness alone, which it discriminates alike from the weakness of vice on the one hand, and from weakness attended by suffering on the other. The expression of contempt is a sarcastic laughter, akin to the laughter of mirth, and the milder form of pity betrays itself in a smile. There is, moreover, evidently a close connexion between laughter and tears. Pity, not mirth, would be the characteristic emotion of one who was brought habitually into contact with the weakness of humanity in the form of suffering; but the same power of sympathy would render him capable of genial mirth if brought into contact with weakness in a merely grotesque and comic form. According as the one or the other was his lot, his character would take a brighter or a sadder hue; but we cannot help feeling that the lot of man here, having more in it of the painful than of the laughable, the sadder character is the more sympathetic, the more human, and the deeper of the two. That a feeling for human weakness is wanting in the type of Character presented to us by the Gospels, will hardly be affirmed; though the feeling takes the sadder and deeper form; the gayer and brighter form being obviously excluded by the circumstances of the case, as the Gospel history sets it forth. Perhaps, indeed, the exclusion is not so absolute but that a trace of the happier emotion may be discerned. Just at the point where human mirth passes into pity there is a shade

of tender irony, which forms the good element of the whole school of sentimental humourists, such as Sterne and Carlyle, and which has, for its exciting cause, the littleness and frailty of man's estate. This shade of irony is perhaps just perceptible in such passages as that which compares the laborious glory of Solomon with the unlaboured beauty of the lilies of the field; a passage by which Mr. Carlyle is strongly attracted, and in which he evidently recognises the root of that which is true in his own view of the world. It would seem then that mirth, humour, the great masters of mirth and humour, and the whole of that element in the estate and history of man, are not beyond the Christian type of character, but within it.

Mr. Newman has attempted to deny not only that the Christian type of Character is perfect, but that it is unique. What character then in history is its equal? If a rival can be found, the allegiance of humanity may be divided or transferred. Mr. Newman fixes, evidently with some misgiving, and without caring accurately to verify a youthful recollection, on the character of Fletcher of Madeley. Fletcher's character was no doubt one of remarkable beauty, and certainly not wanting in righteous indignation against Pharisees. But being that of an Evangelical Divine, it was produced, not independently, but by a constant imitation of the Character of Christ. Mr. Newman should have gone elsewhere for an independent instance; to the School of Socrates, to the School of Roman Stoicism, to the Court and Camp of Bonaparte. He knows history too well.

The truth is, that Sectarianism has narrowed not only the pale of Christianity, but the type of Christian character; and made men think of it as a rigid,

austere, priestly, or puritanic mould, shutting out the varied grandeur, beauty, and beneficence of history : so that a schism has been produced between the consecrated type and the heart of man. There are in history a multitude of mixed characters, often of a very fascinating kind. In these we must separate the good from the evil before we pronounce that the good does not belong to Christianity. I will take a mixed character which I have more than once used as an illustration before, and to which all historians have been strongly attracted in spite of its great defects,—the character of Wallenstein. If that which is a real object of moral admiration in Wallenstein can be shewn to be Christian, as crucial an experiment as it is easy to devise will have been successfully performed. But we must begin by examining the character closely, and set aside those parts of it which are not the real objects of moral admiration. In the first place, we must set aside the mere irregularity, which has in it nothing moral, but by which we are fascinated in no slight degree. When morality is presented to us in itself, as the object of our moral affections, we cannot help entirely loving it ; but when it is presented to us as a formal law, we cannot help a little hating it : and we are pleased when we are able to rebel against its letter, with the spirit, or some semblance of it, on our side ; a feeling which is the real talisman of all that school of sentimental literature of which Byron is the chief. In the second place, we must set aside Wallenstein's reserve and loneliness, qualities which please us partly because they excite our curiosity and stimulate our social affections by a sort of half-denial, partly also because, from experience, they raise in us an expectation of real moral excellences, strength of



mind, and that capacity for warm affection which often lurks in the most reserved characters while it is wanting in the least reserved. We must set aside again mere intellectual power, which is never the object of moral admiration except as the instrument, actual or presumptive, of moral virtue. The darker parts of Wallenstein's character, his violence and his unscrupulousness, are set aside without question: no one can worship them but the wicked or the delirious. There remains the majesty of his character, crowned by his proud and silent death. Now this majesty was produced by sacrificing the lower and meaner appetites and passions, above all, the passion of fear, to a moral ideal, which, such as it was, Wallenstein struggled to attain. The ideal was to a great extent a false one, and deeply tainted by the absence of religious sentiment to which a great man placed in the midst of bigots and Jesuits was naturally reduced. But it was an ideal, and the pursuit of an ideal, though it be that of a Cynic, is essentially the pursuit of an unselfish object; it is an endeavour to elevate humanity, at the expense of the selfish appetites of the individual man. The end of such endeavours is a common good. It is an addition to the high examples and the nobleness of the world. Nor is the reward anything but the affection of man, which proud, high characters only seek more deeply when they seem perhaps, even to themselves, to scorn and repel it. The case may be put in other, probably in more exact and truer terms, but I do not think it can be put so as to make it anything but a case of self-denial and self-sacrifice; and if it be a case of self-denial and self-sacrifice, it belongs to the Christian type. To the same type unquestionably belongs that

resignation in death, which so deeply moves our hearts as a victory over our great common enemy, and which completes the historical figure of Wallenstein. His acts of mercy, his protests against cruel persecution, the traits of his conjugal affection, need no reconciling explanation to bring them within the Christian pale.

History will trace a moral connexion, where it really exists, through all intellectual divisions and under all eclipses of intellectual faith. In her eyes Christendom remains morally one, though divided, ecclesiastically, by a thousand accidents, by a thousand infirmities, by a thousand faults.

It is said that Voltaire and Rousseau were great contributors to human progress; and that they were not Christians, but enemies to Christianity and outcasts from the Christian pale. I admit that Voltaire and Rousseau, in spite of the fearful mischief which every rational man must admit them to have done, were contributors to human progress, but I deny that so far as they were contributors to human progress they were enemies to Christianity, or outcasts from the Christian pale. Voltaire contributed to human progress in spite of his unchristian levity, mockery, vanity, and obscenity, by preaching Christian beneficence, Christian toleration, Christian humanity, Christian hatred of Pharisaical oppression. Rousseau contributed to human progress in spite of his unchristian impurity, and the egotistical madness from which practical Christianity would have saved him, by preaching Christian brotherhood and Christian simplicity of life. Rousseau's writings are full of the Gospel. His theory of the world is couched in distinctly Gospel language, and put into the mouth of



a Christian minister. Voltaire railed against what he imagined was Christianity, but you see in a moment it was not the real Christianity ; it was the Christianity of the false, corrupt, and persecuting State Church of France, the Christianity which recalled the Edict of Nantes, which inspired the Dragonades, which, in the abused name of the religion of love, murdered Calas and La Barre. Whom did Voltaire call the best of men ? Of whom did he say, with an earnestness to which his nature was almost a stranger, that he loved them, and that, if he could, he would pass the rest of his life among them in a distant land ? It was not the philosophers of Paris or Berlin of whom he spoke thus, but the Quakers, with whose sect, then in its happiest hour, he had come into contact during his residence in England, and whose benevolence, tolerance, and gentle virtues he recognises as identical at once with those of the Primitive Christians and with his own.

The French Revolution again, with all its crimes and follies, must, up to a certain point in its course, be accepted as a step, though a sinister and equivocal step, in the progress of mankind. But we have brought all that was good in the French Revolution,—its aspirations after universal brotherhood, and a universal reign of liberty and justice,—into the pale of moral Christianity with Rousseau and Voltaire. From no other source than Christianity was derived the genuine spirit of self-devotion which, it is vain to doubt, sent forth on a crusade for the freedom and happiness of man, the best soldiers of the Revolutionary armies,—those of whom Hoche and Marceau were the gentle, brave, and chivalrous types. On the other hand, it was not from Christianity, but from a dark deprava-

tion of Christianity, abhorred by all in whom the graces of the Christian character are seen, that the Montagnards derived that lust of persecution which reproduced the Inquisition and its butcheries in the Committee of Public Safety and the Reign of Terror. There are men, neither mad nor wicked, to whom the enthusiasts of the Jacobin Club are still objects of fervent admiration. Such a feeling is strange, but not unaccountable. The account of it is to be found in the faint tradition of Christian fraternity which passed from the Gospel through Rousseau to Robespierre and St. Just, and which has redeemed even these sinister names from the utter execration of history. Deep as was the abyss of crime into which those fanatics fell, there was a deeper abyss beyond. All influence of Christianity was indeed gone when the lives of millions and the hopes of a world were sacrificed, not to any political or social visions, however chimerical, but to the utterly selfish and utterly atheistic ambition of Napoleon. The worship of that conqueror by the nation which gave the blood of its children to his evil deity for the sake of sharing his domination, was, under the forms of a civilized age, the worship of Moloch and the worship of Cæsar, the old antagonists of Jehovah and of Christ. Comte is at least an impartial witness in this matter; and Comte sees progress in Jacobinism, where Christianity was still faintly present, while he most justly pronounces the domination of Napoleon to have been utterly retrograde.

Does Christianity, then, interfere with progress of any particular kind, intellectual or industrial?

Does it interfere with the progress of science? As a matter of fact, science has not only been ad-

vanced, but for the most part created by Christians. A bigoted or cowardly theology has indeed created some confusion in the relations between science and religion, by attempting to dominate beyond its proper sphere; but the highest scientific minds have found no difficulty in keeping their own course clear, and preserving religious and moral Christianity, in spite of any imperfections in the scientific ideas of its teachers caused by their having lived in an unscientific age. That religious persecution has fearfully interfered with science, and every other kind of intellectual progress, both by its direct and its indirect effects, may be easily granted. But the tendency to persecution has historically been limited to countries in which certain vicious relations existed between religion and political power. If it has been found beyond these limits, it was as a lingering habit and in an expiring state.

Is it the Christian conception of God that is likely to conflict with the progress of science, or of moral philosophy? We see at once that Polytheism, subjecting the different parts of nature to the sway of different Powers, conflicts with the unity of creation which the progress of science displays. Let it be shewn that Christian Monotheism does the same. There is indeed—and it is a momentous fact in historical philosophy—what Hume calls a Natural History of Religion. All nations have been endowed with the same germ of religious sentiment; but they have made to themselves different images of God, according to the peculiar aspects of nature with which they were brought into contact, and the state of their own civilization. The tendency is not yet extinct. Narrow-minded men of science, accustomed to only one sphere

of thought, still create for themselves what they think a grander Deity in their own image, rob the Divine Nature of its moral part, and set up a Scientific God. If the Christian conception of the Deity were tainted by one of these historical accidents, even in the slightest degree, the time would come, in the course of human inquiry, when history would acknowledge the grandeur of such a conception, record its temporary beneficence, and number it with the past. But it is tainted with no historical accident whatever. It is Pure Paternity. What discoveries respecting man or the world, what progress of science or philosophy, can be imagined with which the simple conception of God as the Father of All could possibly conflict?

It is true that Christianity has something of a mysterious character. But that, on this account, it must interfere with intellectual freedom, or anything for which intellectual freedom is requisite, can hardly be said, when Hume himself emphatically speaks of the world as a mystery, and when the acutest writers of the same school at the present day find it necessary to gratify a true intellectual instinct by reminding us that, after all, beyond that which science makes known to us there lies the mysterious Unknown <sup>a</sup>.

The moral source and support of great scientific inquiries, as of other great undertakings for the good of mankind, is self-devotion; and self-devotion is the Christian virtue.

Does Christianity interfere with political progress? The great instrument of political progress is generally allowed to be liberty. It is allowed to be so ultimately even by those who wish to suppress it provisionally, and to inaugurate for the present a despotic dictator-

<sup>a</sup> See Mr. Herbert Spencer's work on "First Principles," p. 223.



ship of their own ideas. And Christianity, by first proclaiming the equality and brotherhood of men, became the parent of just and enduring liberty. What spiritual power presided over the birth of our free institutions? Was it not the earnest though narrow and distorted Christianity of the Middle Ages, which still, though its hour is past, shews its ancient spirit in Montalembert? What power was it that directly consecrated the principle of local self-government, the foundation of all true liberty, in the religious association of the parish? Cast your eyes over the map of nations, and see whether sincere Christianity and political freedom are unsuited to dwell together. Name, if you can, any great Christian philosopher who has been an enemy to freedom. On the other hand, Hobbes, Bolingbroke, Hume, Gibbon, were Imperialists; they all belonged, though in different degrees, to the school which takes a sensual and animal view of man, mistrusts all moral and spiritual restraints, and desires a strong despotism to preserve tranquillity, refinement, and the enjoyments and conveniences of life. It need not be added that the most fanatical enemies of Christianity at the present day are also fanatical imperialists. We have almost a decisive instance of the two opposite tendencies in the case of Rousseau and Voltaire. Rousseau had far more of the Gospel in his philosophy than Voltaire: and while the political Utopia of Voltaire inclined on the whole to Imperialism, being, in fact, a visionary China, and his sympathies were with those whom he imagined to be the beneficent despots of his age, the political Utopia of Rousseau inclined to an exaggeration of liberty, being a visionary State of Nature, and his sympathies were entirely with the people. What are the elements external to itself,

which Christianity has found most cognate, and of which it has taken up most into its own system? They are the two free nations of antiquity,—nations whose freedom indeed was a narrow, and therefore a short-lived one, compared with that of Christendom, but whose thoughts and works were those of the free. The game of freedom is a bold game; those who play it, unlike the Imperialist, must be prepared to face present turbulence, extravagance, and waywardness, and much besides that is disappointing and repulsive, for the sake of results which are often distant; while the Imperialist proposes, by a beneficent dictatorship, to keep all calm and rational for at least one life. And this bold game Christianity, by the force of her spiritual elevation, and of her cardinal virtue of hope, has always shewn herself able and ready to play. By mere force of spiritual elevation, with no philosophic chart of the future to guide and assure her, she turned with a victorious steadiness of conviction, such as science itself could scarcely have imparted, from the dying civilization of Rome to the fierce, coarse, destroying barbarism out of which, through her training, was to spring a higher civilization, a gentler as well as a better world. If Christianity has ever seemed to be the ally of despotism, it was because she was herself corrupted and disguised either by delirious asceticism, confounding self-degradation with humility, or by ecclesiastical Jesuitism intriguing with political power. The second of these agencies has, indeed, been at work on a great and terrible scale: on such a scale that those who saw no other form of Christianity around them may well be pardoned for having taken Christianity to be an enemy of liberty as well as of the truth. But the facts of history point the other way. The

seriousness of Christianity and its deep sense of individual responsibility opposed themselves, though in a stern and harsh form, to Stuart despotism, with its Buckingham, its "Book of Sports," and its disregard of morality and truth. The spiritual energy and hopefulness of Christianity opposed themselves to the old Imperialism of Hobbes and the Sensualists, who would have sacrificed the hopes of humanity to material convenience. The charity and humility of Christianity oppose themselves to the new Imperialism, which we are told is to inaugurate a fresh era of civilization, and which is, in fact, an insane reverie of rampant egotism, dreaming of itself as clothed with absolute power to force its own theories on the world.

Does political progress depend on theory? Why should they study that theory less earnestly, with a mind less free from the disturbance of interest and ambition, or in any way less successfully, whose actuating principle is the love of their neighbour, while they are raised by their spiritual life above the selfish motives which are the great obstacles to the attainment and reception of political truth? Does political progress depend upon action? Political action requires a fixed aim, a cool head, and a firm hand. And why should not these be found for the future, as throughout past history they have been found, in statesmen whose objects are disinterested, and whose treasure is not here? Desperate anxiety for the issue is not necessary, or even conducive to success. A man might play a match at chess more eagerly, but he would not play it better, if his life were staked on the game. It was not supposed that Tell's aim would be steadier when the apple was placed on the head of his child.

We have been told that Christianity almost stifled

the political genius of Cromwell. "Almost" is a saving word. The greatest statesman, perhaps, that the world ever saw, and the one who most largely contributed to the greatness of his country, even in the most vulgar and material sense, not only was a Christian, but drew from Christianity, though tainted in his case with Judaism, every principle, every idea, every expression of his public life.

If it is philanthropic enterprise that is to regenerate society, with this, again, Christianity has, to say the least, no inherent tendency to interfere. I ventured to challenge the Positivists, who condemn the Christian view of the world for giving the negro races no part in the historical development of humanity, to shew what part in the historical development of humanity these races had really played. It is Christianity alone, I submit, which assigns them a place in history, by making them the subjects of those great missionary and philanthropic enterprises which form so important a part of the life of Christendom. As the subjects of such enterprises they do indeed contribute to the development of humanity by developing the religious sympathies and affections. Positive Science requires that these races, like the rest, should pass, by a spontaneous movement, from Fetichism into Polytheism, and so, through Monotheism, into Atheism, with the corresponding series of social and political phases. Christianity, disregarding positive science, sets to work to turn them into civilized Christians.

An eminent writer, before mentioned, thinks he has contravened Christianity in saying that now, having ceased to be a Christian, he loves with a deliberate love the world and the things of the world. So he did when, being a Christian, he went as a missionary



to the East. To love the world, it is not necessary to think there is no evil in the world. On the contrary, it is the strong sense of the evil existing in the world that, by exciting the desire to remove it, has led to all the noble enterprizes of history. Neither need the conviction, however deep, that the world is transitory, diminish the desire to labour for its good, if the good done is to be not transitory but eternal. We are told that the social activity of Christians must be paralyzed by the views which are alleged to be a part of Christianity, respecting the constant imminence of the Last Day. Why then is not all social activity paralyzed by the constant imminence of death?

Again, it is insinuated that the progress of enlightened views respecting the duties of nations towards each other, must be retarded by the dark lust of conquest which is inspired by the popular religion, with its gloomy worship of the God of Battles. I am unable to discern any historical foundation for this notion. Christianity is not committed to the conduct of the State Priests who sang *Te Deums* for the successful rapine of Louis XIV.; a rapine which, it may be remarked by the way, was at least equalled, when the last restraints of religion had been removed, by the atheist Emperor who afterwards sat on the same throne. Neither is Christianity committed to the excesses of fanatical sectaries who took the Old Testament for their Gospel instead of the New. The uncritical Puritan could not so clearly see what we by the light of historical criticism most clearly see, that the Jews were not a miracle but a nation; and that, like all other nations, they had their primitive epoch of conquest and of narrow nationality, with moral views correspondingly narrow: though the whole of this

natural history of the Jewish race was instinct with, and, as it were, transmuted by, a moral and religious spirit, to which it is idle to say a parallel can be found in the history of any other nation. The character of David, for example, by its beauty, its chivalry, and its childlike and passionate devotion, has sunk deep into the affections of humanity, and justified the sentence that he was the man after God's own heart: but he could not be expected, any more than a prince of any other primitive nation, to anticipate modern enlightenment and humanity by observing the laws of civilized war, and giving quarter to the garrison and inhabitants of a conquered town.

This error of the Puritans, however, after all, has not left so very deep a stain on history. They were not so very ignorant of the real relations between the Old Testament and the New. The notion of their having regarded their enemies as Canaanites, and smitten them hip and thigh, is mainly due to the imagination of loose historical writers. No civil war in history had ever been conducted with half so much humanity or with half so much self-restraint as that which they conducted in the spirit of their mixed Hebrew and Christian religion. Fanciful or cynical writers may picture Cromwell as feeling a stern satisfaction at the carnage of Drogheda and Wexford: but Cromwell's own despatches excuse it, on the ground that it would save more blood in the end. You have only to turn to the civil war of the French Revolution—carried on, as it was, in the meridian light of modern civilization, and with an entire freedom from superstitious influences—to know that even the stern spirit of the Old Testament has not been the most cruel power in history. There has been, in truth, a good deal of exaggeration,

and even some cant upon this subject. Men who weep over the blood which was shed by Jewish hands in the name of morality, are not indisposed, if we may judge by their historical sympathies, to take pretty strong measures for an idea. They can embrace, with something like rapture, the butcherly vagrancy laws of a Tudor King, his brutal uxoricides, his persecutions, his judicial murders perpetrated on blameless and illustrious men, because he belongs to a class of violent and unscrupulous characters in history, whom their school are pleased to style heroes. I see that, according to a kindred school of philosophers, Titus performed an unavoidable duty in exterminating the Jews for rebelling against the idea of Imperialism, which they could scarcely, without a miracle, be expected to apprehend. Cæsar is becoming an object of adoration, evidently as a supposed type of certain great qualities in which the Christian type is supposed to be wanting. He stands as one of the great historical Saints of the Comtist Calendar, a month being called after his name. Yet this beneficent demigod put to the sword a million of Gauls, and sold another million into slavery, partly in the spirit of Roman conquest, but principally to create for himself a military reputation.

Then it is intimated that the political economy of Christianity is bad, and that it has interfered with the enjoyment, and therefore with the production, of wealth. There can be no doubt that Christianity, so far as it has had an influence in history, has always tended to the employment of productive rather than of unproductive labour, and to the promotion of art rather than of luxury. But these are not yet alleged to be economical evils. Wealth has been just as much en-

joyed, and the production of wealth just as much stimulated, by the building of splendid churches, by the employment of great artists, and by a munificent expenditure for the common benefit, as by the indulgence of personal luxury and pride. It is in Christian states, in states really Christian, that Commerce has appeared in its most energetic and prosperous, as well as in its noblest form; the greatest maritime discoveries have been made under the banner of the Cross; and he who says that the life of Gresham or Columbus was alien to Christianity, says what is historically absurd. Capital and credit are the life of commercial enterprise. The Gospel inculcates the self-denial which is necessary to the accumulation of capital; and, to say the least, it does not discourage the honesty which is the foundation of credit. Honest labour and activity in business will hardly be said to be condemned by St. Paul; and if the anxious and covetous overstraining of labour is opposed to Christianity, it is equally opposed to economical wisdom. Of course the first authors of Christianity did not teach political economy before its hour. They took these, like the other political and social arrangements of the world, as they found them, and relieved poverty in the way in which it was then relieved. The science of Political Economy, since it left the hands of its great founder, has fallen to a great extent into the hands of men of less comprehensive minds, under whose treatment it has gone near to erecting hardness of heart into a social virtue. No doubt there would speedily be a divorce between Christianity and the progress of such a science as this. But this is not the science of Adam Smith. Adam Smith understood the value, moral as well as material, of property; but



he also understood the relative value of property and affection.

If the community of goods among the early Christians is cited as a proof that Christianity must be opposed to economical progress, the answer is, that Christianity has never erected, or tended to erect, this natural expression of new-born love and zeal into a normal condition of society. Whenever a great religious movement has taken place in history, the spirit of humanity has beaten in this way against its earthly bars, and struggled to realize at once that which cannot be realized within any calculable time, if it is destined ever to be realized here. Christian philosophers have pronounced the judgment of rational Christianity on Socialism in no ambiguous terms. Yet surely political economists are too well satisfied with their science if they feel confident that its laws, or supposed laws, have yet been harmonized with a sound social morality, and with the rational aspirations of social man. Surely they must see further into the future course of history than any one else can see, if they are able to assure us that the social motives to industry can never prevail over the personal motives; or even that the arrangements in which all reasonable men at present acquiesce are certainly nearer than those of primitive Christianity to the ultimate social ideal.

The Christian character has of course been treated of here in its moral and social aspect alone, because in that character alone it is manifested in history, and brought into direct relations with historical progress. But it is inconceivable that the Love of God should ever conflict with the Love of our Neighbour. It is

inconceivable that the one should ever fail to be supported and intensified by the other. The Comtists may preserve their love of Humanity in all its fervour: they will find it equally fervent in those who add to it the love of God.

It has been objected that Christianity, from the mere fact of its being an historical religion, opposes progress by compelling the world always to look backward. I scarcely apprehend the force of this objection, though those who make it evidently feel it to be of great force. If a type of character was to be set up for the imitation of mankind, it was necessary that it should be set up at some point in history, and that the eye of humanity should always be turned to that point, wherever it might be. But the fixity of the point in history at which the guiding light was revealed, no more interferes with historical progress than the fixity of the pole-star interferes with the progress of a ship.

There is, indeed, another objection, of a much graver kind, to the sufficiency of a merely historical religion. Historical evidence, being the evidence of witnesses who are dead, and who may possibly, however improbably, have been mistaken, cannot rise beyond a high probability. It cannot amount to such absolute certainty as we derive from the evidence of our senses, or from that of our moral perceptions. And probability, however high, though a sufficient ground for our practical decisions, is not a sufficient ground for our religious faith and feelings. Butler has imported the rules of worldly prudence into a sphere where they have no place. We may wisely stake our worldly interests on a probable or even, if

the prize be great, on a merely possible event; but we cannot worship and commune with a Being on a probability even of ten thousand to one that he is God.

But here again history, taking a broad view of the facts, finds a sufficient answer to the question whether Christendom is likely to perish under mere historical objections. In all that has really created and sustained Christendom there is nothing which rests on historical evidence alone. That which has created and sustained Christendom has been the Christian idea of God as the Father of all, the spiritual life supported by that idea, the Character of Christ always present as the object of Christian affection and the model for Christian imitation, and the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The fact of the Resurrection itself, like the immortality of the soul of which it is the pledge, rests on other than mere historical evidence. It rests in part on the doctrine, cognizable by reason, independently of historical evidence, that, from the intimate connection between death and sin, a perfectly sinless nature, such as that of Him who overcame the grave, could not be holden of death<sup>b</sup>.

Has no great crisis, then, arrived in the history of Christendom? Certainly a great crisis has arrived, and one which bids fair soon to merge small doubts and difficulties in mighty events. But it is not so

<sup>b</sup> It is commonly assumed that the theory respecting the formation of character by habit, the laws of which are analogous to the laws of matter, is equally applicable to the formation of vice and to the formation of virtue. But is not virtue rather a gradual emancipation of the reason and conscience, the sovereign powers of the soul, from everything in the shape of motive that can affect them in a mechanical manner and enslave them to the laws of matter, and to the material accident, death?

clear that this crisis is an unhappy one. We may be sure it is one which has been long in preparation. Of the great events of history it may be said with more truth, or at least with more practical import, than it was said by Montaigne of death, "Every day they approach, the last day they arrive." We may be sure also that what is coming will be what the world has deserved; and the world has of late been a scene of religious, moral, political, and intellectual effort, often perhaps misguided and often equivocal, but still effort, which has at least deserved a different meed from that due to lethargy and despair. Finally, we may be sure that good will assert that indestructible quality which history recognises in it, and pass from the old state of things entire in substance, though perhaps changed in form, into the new.

The members of the divided Churches have prayed for their re-union through the conversion of all to the peculiar doctrines of one. It seems as though the prayer were now about to be granted in a less miraculous manner by the simple removal, through concurrent moral and political causes, of the grand cause of division in Christendom. If historical symptoms are to be trusted, the long death-agony of three centuries is about to terminate, and within no very long period the Papacy will cease to exist. The chief historical conditions of its existence have expired, or are rapidly expiring. In the supremacy of human authority over reason in the mind of man the power of Rome had its origin and being; and the supremacy of reason over human authority in the mind of man is now decisive and complete. The rationalistic theories of recent advocates of the Papacy, such as De Maistre and Dr. Newman, are suicidal concessions to the spirit



of a changed world. The loss of moral allegiance, even in countries nominally Papal, has for some time past been continuous and rapid; and we ourselves well know the source whence the small, precarious, and equivocal accessions of strength have been derived. The great revolt of the Reformation was arrested in its progress over Europe partly by accidents of national temperament and comparative mental cultivation, partly and principally by the persecuting power of the great Catholic Monarchies, which conspired to preserve the Papacy as the keystone of despotism, and by balancing each other, gave it a factitious independence, of which the suspension of Italian nationality was also a necessary condition. The Catholic Monarchies are dead or dying. A Voltairian dynasty, the offspring of the French Revolution, sits on the throne of Charles IX. The successors of Philip II. have suppressed monasteries and allied themselves with the liberal house of Orleans. The heir of Ferdinand II. has been compelled to recognise Protestantism and to grant a Constitution to the Austrian Empire. The balance of power between France, Spain, and Austria having been destroyed, the nominal head of Christendom has sunk to a puppet of French diplomacy, degraded to the dust by the sinister and contemptuous support which prolongs the existence of his mutilated power. The revival of Italian nationality seems now to be assured. It is vain to think that the Primate of an Italian kingdom can be the Father of Christendom. It is equally vain to think that the national government of Italy can suffer an independent potentate, elected by a European conclave, to exist at its side. It is vain to talk of dividing the temporal from the spiritual power. To command the soul is to com-

mand the man. It was for the Suzerainty of Europe, and for nothing less, that the Papacy and the Germanic Empire fought, the one with the arms of force, the other with the arms of superstition. We might share the dream of a purely spiritual Papacy if we did not know too well that the Papal power, to whatever extent it may have been exercised for spiritual ends, was the creature of political accidents and political influences, aided by the instruments, not spiritual, though not strictly material, of religious intimidation and intrigue. The Papacy will perish; and in it will perish the great obstacle to the reconciliation and re-union of Christendom. Nor will it perish alone. It will draw down with it in its fall, sooner or later, all those causes of division which have subsisted by mere antagonism to it, and many which it has kept alive by its direct, though unrecognised, influence over the rest of the ecclesiastical world. Then, if Christianity be true, there may, so far as the outward arrangements of the world are concerned, once more arise a Christendom, stripped indeed of much that is essential to religion in the eyes of polemical theologians, but as united, grand, and powerful, as capable of pervading with its spirit the whole frame of society, as fruitful of religious art and all other manifestations of religious life, as Christendom was before the great schism; but resting on the adamant basis of free conviction, instead of the sandy foundation of human authority and tradition supported by political power. Those who imagine that such a consummation, if it come, must come with terrible convulsions and distress, do not consider that a great part of educated Europe has, in fact, for some time been united, and guided in the conduct of life and in all international

and general relations, by a common Christianity. The world, as usual, has anticipated the results of speculation by tacitly solving a great practical problem for itself; and it has found that the brightness of the sunbeam resides in the sunbeam, not in the motes, and that the crystal floor of Heaven is not as unstable as water because it is as clear.







